

Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Mexico

United States Board on Geographic Names – Foreign Names Committee



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1. Introduction

This geographic names standardization policy has been prepared as an aid to those geographic names experts who are the working staff for the United States Board on Geographic Names (BGN) in the standardization of Mexican geographic names for United States Government use. The BGN and its staff work to effect consistent treatment of geographic name spellings in U.S. Government databases, publications, maps, and charts, and are intended to satisfy the statutory requirements levied upon the U.S. Board on Geographic Names in Public Law USC 80-242 to develop principles, policies and procedures for geographic names standardization, and to promulgate decisions with respect to the principles of geographic nomenclature and orthography.

2. Languages and Language Policy in Mexico

a. *Demographics*

In 2010, the population of Mexico was estimated at 113 million. In Mexico, the two main ethnic categories are mestizo and Indian/Amerindian. Approximately 60% of the population is mestizo or mixed Spanish and Amerindian, 30% of the population is Amerindian, 9% white, and 1% other. Roman Catholicism is the main religion with 76.5% of the population identifying themselves as such. Protestants were the second largest religious group accounting for 6.3% of the population.¹

b. *Languages*

Spanish (ISO 639-3 code: spn) is the *de facto* official language of Mexico. The country's 290 minority languages are used locally by indigenous people.

Most of the minority languages are encountered in the eastern half of the country. Many of these belong to the Uto-Aztecan, Mayan, Totonacan, and Oto-Manguean language families and are richly reflected in the toponymy of these areas. In the Mayan family of languages, Mayan Yucatán (ISO 639-3 code: yua) has the largest speaking population of 700,000 in the Campeche, Quintana Roo, and Yucatán states. Chamula Tzotzil (ISO 639-3 code: tzc) with 265,000 speakers and Mayo (ISO 639-3 code: mfy) with 40,000 speakers are also common Mayan languages in Mexico. Central Huasteca Nahuatl (ISO 639-3 code: nch) is an Uto-Aztecan language with approximately 400,000 speakers. Furthermore, Coyutla Totonac (ISO 639-3 code: toc), with an estimated 50,000 speakers, is another indigenous language found in Mexico. . Totonac languages are found in the Veracruz and Puebla states. Finally, Central Mazahua (ISO 639-3 code: maz) is an Oto-Manguean language. There are 350,000 speakers of Central Mazahua found in the northwest part of the country.²

In March 2003, the first *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas*, or the Law of the Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples, was published by the Mexican government to provide recognition and protection of the linguistic, individual, and collective rights to indigenous people and communities and to promote the use and development of indigenous

¹ Mexico. The CIA World Factbook. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html>>. Accessed 1 Mar 2011.

² Lewis, M. Paul (ed.), 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Sixteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. <<http://www.ethnologue.com/>>. 04 Mar 2011.

languages. A later version of the law was published in June 2010. In regards to toponymy, the new law will ensure that official signs and place names within indigenous municipalities of the country will contain names in Spanish and the indigenous languages of the territory.³ At this time, no information exists that explains the implementation process of this new law or whether indigenous names have been collected.

c. Geographic Names Standardization

According to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), Mexico does not have a national naming authority as of March 2011.⁴ The Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática's (INEGI) Subdirectora de Extracción Vectorial, however, is responsible for the stewardship and dissemination of geographical names. For more information regarding geographical names in Mexico, please visit <http://www.inegi.org.mx/geo/contenidos/nomgeo/default.aspx> >.

During the 26th Session of the UNGEGN, the Latin America Division presented an update to their work in standardizing names in the region. Mexico stated that they had updated the list of cities with a population larger than 100,000. This list was derived from the 2010 Population and Housing Census. Furthermore, the INEGI prepared a proposal to establish itself as the national naming authority, or *Autoridad Nacional en Nombres Geográficos*.

Moreover, the Mexican government will soon publish a document, titled *Norma Técnica de Nombres Geográficos Continentales e Insulares de México*, which will offer a technical standard for continental and island names of Mexico. This new guide will resemble the November 2010 publication for the Technical Standard for Geographic Addresses which focused on geographic names for federal entities, municipalities, localities, human settlements, and roads.

Finally, an implementation workshop was created for the Technical Standards for Geographic Addresses. 19 Mexican state governments have received training through this workshop.⁵

3. Toponymic Policies

a. Orthography

Spanish orthographic conventions are to be followed. For more information, please refer to Spanish orthographic reference material such as *Ortografía y ortotipografía del español actual* by José Martínez de Sousa (2004).

³ Article XV. *Ley General de Derechos Lingüísticos de los Pueblos Indígenas*. Cámara de Diputados del H. Congreso de la Unión. 18 Jun 2010. <<http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/257.pdf>>. 31 May 2011.

⁴ United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). National Naming Authorities. <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/Names%20authoritiescontactsNov06.pdf>> 22 Oct 2010.

⁵ Informe de Avance en la Normalización de Nombres Geográficos de los Países Miembros de la División de América Latina. 26th Session the UNGEGN. May 2011. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/26th-gegn-docs/WP/WP92_INFORME_DE%20LA%20DIVISION%20DE%20AMERICA%20LATINA.pdf>. 02 Jun 2011.

b. Diacritics

Diacritics are shown in standardized name forms as they appear on native sources and in accordance with Spanish orthography. Uppercase letters in standardized name forms retain diacritics.

In accordance with Spanish orthography, the following diacritics are encountered in standardized name forms in Mexico:

<u>Character Name</u>	<u>Character</u>	<u>Unicode Value</u>
Capital A with acute accent	Á	00C1
Capital E with acute accent	É	00C9
Capital I with acute accent	Í	00CD
Capital N with tilde	Ñ	00D1
Capital O with acute accent	Ó	00D3
Capital U with acute accent	Ú	00DA
Capital U with dieresis	Ü	00DC
Small a with acute accent	á	00E1
Small e with acute accent	é	00E9
Small i with acute accent	í	00ED
Small n with tilde	ñ	00F1
Small o with acute accent	ó	00F3
Small u with acute accent	ú	00FA
Small u with dieresis	ü	00FC

c. Generic Terms

A generic is a term in the name that describes a feature. Examples include words such as ‘river,’ ‘hill,’ and ‘lake.’ Except in cases in which the generic type does not identify the feature type, generics appearing in standardized name forms should be considered true generics. Otherwise, the term is considered to be a false generic and should not be collected as a generic. Generics are not collected for populated places.

A glossary of generic terms can be found in Appendix A.

d. Capitalization

The definite article (*el, la, lo, los, las*) is generally shown in approved names as found on native sources. When source evidence regarding the capitalization of the definite article is mixed, associated features with the same name, if present, will be examined to assist in the decision. When a name is encountered in all capital letters, a non-initial definite article will be in lower case when the standardized name form is derived. In the absence of conclusive evidence, non-initial definite articles are written in lowercase letters in the standardized name form.

e. Numbers

Names containing numerals as integral parts, both cardinal and ordinal, should be treated according to the following principles:

- Arabic numerals are ordinarily expanded in Spanish. Examples: *4 Caminos* (on source) is rendered *Cuatro Caminos*; *2da Palma* (on source) is rendered *Segunda Palma*.
- Roman numerals are retained throughout.
- These principles apply to both initial and non-initial numerals.

f. Optional Long and Short Forms

Administrative division names are accorded long and short forms, e.g., Estado de Sinaloa [long form]; Sinaloa [short form].

Long and short forms of names of populated places are approved when supported by official evidence, e.g., Acapulco de Juárez [long form]; Acapulco [short form].

Railroad station names that appear on official sources with the generic term *estación* are given long and short forms as supported by the evidence. Example: Estación Tinum [long form]; Tinum [short form].

Where official maps show more than one populated place with the same name in the same *estado* (state) or *municipio* (municipality) a special effort is to be made to obtain distinguishing long forms from census lists and other official sources.

g. Abbreviations

The following is a list of abbreviations which are regularly found on Mexican cartographic products. Abbreviations in geographic names must be spelled out in the Geographic Names Database.

<u>Abbreviated form</u>	<u>Unabbreviated Form</u>
A.	Arroyo
B.	Bahía
Bco.	Banco
Bo.	Boca
C.	Cabo, Cayo, or Cerro
Co.	Cerro
Ca.	Cañada
Cdon.	Cordón
Cem.	Cementerio
Clla.	Cuchilla
Cord.	Cordillera
Dpto.	Departamento
Ensa.	Ensenada
Esc.	Escuela

Est.	Estación, Estero
Fte.	Fuerte
G.	Golfo
Hac.	Hacienda
I(s).	Isla(s)
Ilte(s).	Islote(s)
L.	Loma
L., Lag.	Lago or Laguna
Mo.	Morro
Mte.	Monte
Nvdo.	Nevado
P.	Playa, Presa, or Pico
Pco.	Pico
Pen.	Península
Pta.	Punta
Pte.	Puente
Pto.	Puerto
Pvcia.	Provincia
Q., Queb., Qda.	Quebrada
R.	Río
Reg.	Región
S.	Sierra
Serr.	Serranía
V.	Valle, Volcán

h. Unique Linguistic Situations

Names containing the conjunction "o"

Some sources may show two or more names for a feature joined by the conjunction "o," meaning "or" (e.g., Río Rojo o Colorado). For the purposes of standardization, only one name is selected as the official standard name. The choice of name as standard will depend on the weight of evidence. If there is no further evidence, one should use the first as the official standard name. In accordance with standard policy, the other names for the feature will be considered variants.

4. Political Geography Policy

a. Country Name and Capital

Country Name

Conventional long form: United Mexican States

Conventional short form: Mexico

Local official long form: Estados Unidos Mexicanos

Local official short form: México

Capital (PPLC)

Approved name long form: Ciudad de México

Approved name short form: México

b. First-order Administrative Divisions

Please see Appendix B for a political map of Mexico.

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Generic</u>	<u>Seat</u>	<u>FIPS 10-4</u>	<u>ISO 3166-2</u>
1.	Aguascalientes	estado	Aguascalientes	MX01	MX-AGU
2.	Baja California	estado	Mexicali	MX02	MX-BCN
3.	Baja California Sur	estado	La Paz	MX03	MX-BCS
4.	Campeche	estado	San Francisco de Campeche	MX04	MX-CAM
5.	Chiapas	estado	Tuxtla Gutiérrez	MX05	MX-CHP
6.	Chihuahua	estado	Chihuahua	MX06	MX-CHH
7.	Coahuila de Zaragoza	estado	Saltillo	MX07	MX-COA
8.	Colima	estado	Colima	MX08	MX-COL
9.	Distrito Federal	distrito	Ciudad de México (PPLC)	MX09	MX-D.F
10.	Durango	estado	Victoria de Durango	MX10	MX-DUR
11.	Guanajuato	estado	Guanajuato	MX11	MX-GUA
12.	Guerrero	estado	Chilpancingo de los Bravo	MX12	MX-GRO
13.	Hidalgo	estado	Pachuca de Soto	MX13	MX-HID
14.	Jalisco	estado	Guadalajara	MX14	MX-JAL
15.	México	estado	Toluca de Lerdo	MX15	MX-MEX
16.	Michoacán de Ocampo	estado	Morelia	MX16	MX-MIC
17.	Morelos	estado	Cuernavaca	MX17	MX-MOR
18.	Nayarit	estado	Tepic	MX18	MX-NAY
19.	Nuevo León	estado	Monterrey	MX19	MX-NLE
20.	Oaxaca	estado	Oaxaca de Juárez	MX20	MX-OAX
21.	Puebla	estado	Puebla de Zaragoza	MX21	MX-PUE
22.	Querétaro	estado	Santiago de Querétaro	MX22	MX-QUE
23.	Quintana Roo	estado	Chetumal	MX23	MX-ROO
24.	San Luis Potosí	estado	San Luis Potosí	MX24	MX-SLP
25.	Sinaloa	estado	Culiacán Rosales	MX25	MX-SIN
26.	Sonora	estado	Hermosillo	MX26	MX-SON
27.	Tabasco	estado	Villahermosa	MX27	MX-TAB
28.	Tamaulipas	estado	Ciudad Victoria	MX28	MX-TAM
29.	Tlaxcala	estado	Tlaxcala de Xicohtécatl	MX29	MX-TLA
30.	Veracruz de Ignacio de la Llave	estado	Xalapa-Enríquez	MX30	MX-VER
31.	Yucatán	estado	Mérida	MX31	MX-YUC
32.	Zacatecas	estado	Zacatecas	MX32	MX-ZAC

c. Disputed Territories

Note: For the latest country specific boundary dispute information, visit the U.S. Department of State's Boundaries and Sovereignty Encyclopedia, or B.A.S.E., at <http://base.us-state.osis.gov/>.

Mexico has no known international territorial disputes.⁶

International features shared by Mexico and the United States have two approved names, which have been determined by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names' (BGN) Foreign Names Committee (FNC) and Domestic Names Committee (DNC).

5. Source Material

a. Preferred Sources

The list of sources shows the most important sources for geographic names selection. All items are available at the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) Research Center.

1. Administrative division maps, various scales, Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes, 1993.
2. México, 1:250,000, Dirección Nacional de Geografía, 1973-83.
3. Atlas de México, 1:250,000, Dirección Nacional de Geografía, 1982.
4. México, 1:50,000, Dirección Nacional de Geografía, 1967-84 (partial coverage)
5. Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informatica Website: www.inegi.gob.mx

b. Other Sources

1. México, 1:4,000,000, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informatica, 1995.
2. México, 1:2,500,000, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informatica, 1994.
3. Gazetteer of Mexico, BGN, 1992.
4. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI). México.
<http://mapserver.inegi.org.mx/mgn2k/?c=646&s=est>

⁶ Country Profile: Mexico. Library of Congress – Federal Research Division. July 2008.
<<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/mxtoc.html>> 09 Mar 2010.

Appendix A – The following is a glossary of generic terms that one may encounter in Mexico. Please note that this list is incomplete and only represents the most frequently occurring generics.

<u>Spanish Generic</u>	<u>Designation Name</u>	<u>Designation Code</u>
acequía, canal	canal	CNL
alto, cerro, cuchilla, morro, montaña, serranía, sierra	mountain	MT
alto, cerro, loma, morro	hills	HILL
arroyo, caño, morichal, quebrada, río	stream	STM
bahía	bay	BAY
banco	bank	BNK
boca, estuario	estuary	ESTY
boca, ensenada	inlet	INLT
bosque, selva	forest	FRST
cabo	cape	CAPE
caño	tidal creek	CRKT
cenote	sinkhole	SINK
ciénaga	marsh	MRSH
ciénaga, laguna	lagoon	LGN
cuchilla, fila, filo	ridge	RDGE
delta	delta	DLTA
departamento	first-order administrative division	ADM1, department
embalse, represa	reservoir	RSV
ensenada	cove	COVE
estero	wetland	WTLD
estrecho	strait	STRT
golfo	gulf	GULF
isla, islote	island	ISL
lago	lake	LK
llano, sabana	plain	PLN
mesa	mesa	MESA
municipio	second-order administrative division	ADM2, municipality
parque, parque nacional	park	PRK
paso	pass	PASS
península	peninsula	PEN
picacho, pico	peak	PK
puente	bridge	BDG
puerto	harbor	HBR
punta	point	PT
rapido, salto	waterfall	FLLS
sabana	grassland	GRSLD

Appendix B – Administrative Map of Mexico (States are identified by FIPS code)

